
**Agriculture & Natural Resources
Committee**

HB 2650

Brief Description: Recognizing important bird areas.

Sponsors: Representatives Linville, Flannigan, Cooper, Priest, Quall, Jarrett, Kessler, Tom, Rockefeller, Dunshee, Grant, Romero, Moeller, McDermott, O'Brien, Chase, Upthegrove, Hunt, Simpson, G., Kenney, Wallace, Wood and Kagi.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Department of Natural Resource's natural heritage program to officially recognize certain sites that are identified by the organization Audubon Washington as having been scientifically determined to be necessary to conserve populations of native and migratory birds and the habitat they are dependent on for breeding, shelter, and sustenance.

Hearing Date: 1/30/04

Staff: Jason Callahan (786-7117).

Background:

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is authorized to maintain a natural heritage program (RCW 79.70.030). This program is designed to provide assistance to the DNR in the selection and nomination of areas in the state containing natural heritage resources. Natural heritage resources are unique types of plant communities, animal species, and geologic or aquatic areas (RCW 79.70.020).

The natural heritage program is required to maintain a database that contains the location of natural heritage resources in the state. The information in the database is available to public and private entities to aid in environmental assessments and land management decisions. Generally, information in the database that relates to wildlife habitat is developed jointly with the Department of Fish and Wildlife. (RCW 79.70.030).

The natural heritage program is directed by the natural heritage plan. This plan is required to provide details on which natural heritage resources are to be considered, and provide criteria for the selection of natural areas (RCW 79.70.030). Natural areas, also known as natural area preserves, are lands which have retained much of their natural character or are important in preserving natural heritage resources (RCW 79.70.020). Natural areas may be purchased, leased,

set aside, or exchanged by the DNR (RCW 79.70.040). Natural areas in the state must be listed on the Washington Register of Natural Area Preserves. To be included on the register, the owner of the natural area must have voluntarily agreed to participate (RCW 79.70.030).

The 15-member Natural Heritage Advisory Council exists to recommend policy for the natural heritage program, advise the state on the management of areas with natural heritage resources, and review nominations for natural area dedication (RCW 79.70.080).

Summary of Bill:

The DNR's natural heritage program is required to officially recognize certain sites that are identified by the organization Audubon Washington (Audubon) as having been scientifically determined to be necessary to conserve populations of native and migratory birds and the habitat they are dependent on for breeding, shelter, and sustenance. The natural heritage program is required to work with Audubon to develop site selection criteria and protocols. When a site, referred to as an important bird area, is identified by Audubon but does not meet the site selection criteria developed, the natural heritage program is not required to recognize the site.

Site data from identified important bird areas must be made available to the general public, along with a map identifying the location of the important bird areas. In addition, the natural heritage program may advise other state land management agencies about the scientific data associated with the important bird area. Audubon is responsible for maintaining a master inventory list and maps of important bird areas in the state.

The Natural Heritage Advisory Council is authorized to advise state agencies of important bird areas under their jurisdiction.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on 1/20/04.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.